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S E C R E T TASHKENT 000229

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 02-25-2019

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SUBJECT: TASHKENT SECURITY ENVIRONMENTAL PROFILE QUESTIONNAIRE -
SPRING 2009

REF: a) STATE 013023

CLASSIFIED BY: Brian Hatheway, ARSO; REASON: 1.4(B), (C), (D), (G)

POLITICAL VIOLENCE

I (SBU) DEMONSTRATIONS

[1](#)A. NO.

i. YES.

ii. YES.

iii. One small demonstration with less than ten participants took place in front of the Embassy in August 2008 to protest Embassy human right activities.

iv. NOT APPLICABLE.

[1](#)B. Other demonstrations are generally peaceful.

i. NOT APPLICABLE

ii. NOT APPLICABLE.

[1](#)C. YES. Occasional small-scale protests over utility shortages are not uncommon in Uzbekistan's provinces during winter. Protests over economic issues, such as jobs and pensions, are rarer, and have typically excited stronger passions. In Post's assessment, the majority of protests should be viewed as local issues, not connected with any larger nationwide trends toward more assertive activism. During January 2008, temperatures in Uzbekistan dropped to their lowest levels in more than seventy years; with these low temperatures, there were corresponding drops in gas pressure for heating and cooking as well. The gas situation led to life-safety issues in many households, and there were protests in the provinces over this difficult situation. The winter of 2009 was not as severe, but the possibility exists for the same conditions to repeat themselves.

i. Two small demonstrations, less than twenty people each, in front of the old Chancery of the U.S. Embassy building in Spring/Summer 2005 in protest of the Government of Uzbekistan (GOU) actions and economic conditions.

ii. The average size ranges from several dozen to 400 participants, with the major exception of Andijan in May 2005, which numbered as many as several thousand people.

iii. In general, demonstrations in Uzbekistan have been peaceful, but there was one very violent and highly publicized exception in May 2005 in Andijan Province. Growing unemployment and endemically high levels of corruption contributed to social unrest. These factors likely played a role in precipitating civil uprisings in the city of Andijan, which in turn led to a very strong government reaction. The Andijan events started with a series of daily peaceful protests over imprisonment of some local businessmen, but

grew considerably over a few days. Armed local extremists took advantage of the situation, attacking government facilities and personnel. According to several witnesses from press and public, a crowd of several thousand civilians gathered in the city center. Government forces were said to have fired into the crowd, leaving an undetermined number of dead. The full scope of the event is not known, and reports vary widely on what actually happened.

iv. NO.

II. (U) MACRO CONFLICT CONDITIONS

1A. Yes, but only small disputes with neighboring countries in the form of very limited border incidents. The potential does exist in the future for conflict over regional water and energy issues, but these have stayed in the diplomatic realm for the time being. Recent Russian diplomatic actions in the region may be exacerbating the potential for such conflict.

1B. NOT APPLICABLE.

1C. NO.

1D. NOT APPLICABLE.

III. (S/NF) HOST COUNTRY CAPABILITIES

1A. NO. However, the level of professionalism and training varies. The majority of units lack adequate funding and equipment. Corruption, accepting bribes, and extorting money from people also are common among Uzbek law enforcement officials. Furthermore, human rights abuses of varying degrees have certainly occurred within local law enforcement activities.

1B. YES. U.S. Government (USG) agencies have conducted some training for both individuals and units. Basic skills in some units have increased, but crisis planning and decision-making remains below average. In addition, even when individuals and units have received the proper training and are well equipped, they often lack the appropriate rules of engagement and the autonomy to make split-second decisions without the need to seek approval from higher echelons. Prison abuse is endemic and torture is an accepted interrogation technique. The GOU frequently harassed, arrested, and prosecuted human rights activists and opposition figures, and several remain imprisoned on politically motivated charges. The GOU also continues to arrest and prosecute individuals on suspicion of extremism, and these individuals often faced severe mistreatment including varying degrees of torture and particularly harsh prison conditions. It should be noted that after the events in Andijan in 2005, funding for the GOU to participate in Anti-Terrorism Assistance (ATA) programs was frozen. In addition, INL and EXBS activities have been scaled back significantly, largely due to lack of GOU cooperation and the summer 2007 arrest and beating of a member of the Embassy's locally-engaged EXBS staff by the Uzbek National Security Service (NSS) on trumped up bribery charges. In the past year there has been some reengagement with the GOU authorities, but Post and the GOU are moving slowly and cautiously.

1C. YES. Corruption is a problem that plagues every law enforcement agency in Uzbekistan. Low salaries and poor working conditions foster a need to locate alternative sources of income. This additional income is usually derived from bribes and extortion schemes.

1D. YES. The Uzbek NSS is professional and capable of deterring terrorist actions. The NSS is a legacy of the Soviet KGB and retains much of the KGB's methodology and expertise. However, the NSS's primary objective is to keep President Karimov in power and to protect him from all threats, physical and political. As such, for the NSS, the targeting of terrorists appears to be a lower priority than the current targeting of regime oppositionists.

1E. NO. Following the May 2005 Andijan events, close cooperation with the NSS halted. In particular, the drawdown that U.S. Embassy Tashkent experienced in June 2005 could have been averted had the NSS shared specific terrorist threat information. In addition, the

deterioration in U.S. - Uzbek bilateral relations virtually halted information sharing between Uzbek law enforcement/intelligence agencies and the Embassy. Uzbek law enforcement authorities have been specifically instructed not to provide the Embassy with any information unless authorized by top government officials. This includes not sharing information as to the result of any Uzbek investigation into a potential threat. In autumn 2007 the NSS began more active intelligence sharing with the Embassy. Even with the mild thaw in relations the Uzbek authorities still require any requests be made in writing with no promise of a response.

1F. YES. The NSS has been successful in identifying, locating and neutralizing specific terrorist threats in country. That said, the NSS has been caught unaware by several terrorist bombings in the past and does not fully control Uzbekistan's borders. This is due not only to the size of the country, but also to the endemic corruption.

1G. YES and NO. Some past Embassy requests for additional protective security resources have been approved and resources provided, while other, more recent requests, even if made officially via diplomatic note to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, went unanswered due to the deterioration in the bilateral relationship. When the US Mission moved to the New Embassy Compound in February 2006, the Uzbek Special Forces unit that was assigned to the old Chancery was instructed by Uzbek authorities to stand down and not report to the new compound. RSO made numerous requests to get the unit redeployed, but was told that no threats exist that would necessitate such a need. In May 2006, RSO's Surveillance Detection (SD) Unit had its off-compound command post raided by police and NSS agents. Five of the Surveillance Detection Unit members were arrested and interrogated for several hours before being released. The Embassy was informed that RSO employees could no longer operate outside of the Embassy compound, and this seriously reduced the effectiveness of the SD program. Because of this, the SD program was later eliminated by Diplomatic Security. In addition, the Tashkent City Administration unilaterally removed the anti-ram barriers from the former Chancery in late 2005, significantly reducing the Embassy's physical security. The explanation for removal was city beautification and preservation of citizens' right to unimpeded access to Tashkent's streets and sidewalks, but the decision is believed to have come from the office of Uzbek President. Although no longer an issue with the move to the new Chancery, this is indicative of the security relationship of the past few years. Finally, the GOU unilaterally removed the Ambassador's protective detail which it had provided, with no prior discussion. In 2008, the Tashkent City Police unilaterally and with no notice removed police protection at the Ambassador's residence. On the positive side, the GOU provided more security than was requested for the July 4th official receptions at the Embassy in 2007 and 2008. In November 2007 the GOU provided more security resources than were requested for the Marine Corps Birthday Ball that was held at a hotel in Tashkent. The Ministry of Internal Affairs (MVD) is showing a somewhat greater willingness to meet with US law enforcement personnel if the meeting request is initiated with a diplomatic note. RSO has also been able to meet regularly with MVD officials charged with the protection of diplomatic facilities in Tashkent.

1H. Security at the airports is considered average.

1I. Customs and immigration controls are susceptible to corruption and are considered average.

1J. AVERAGE. Uzbek Border Guards provide security along borders with neighboring countries, where incursions by terrorists and drug traffickers have occurred or are likely. The border guards have received extensive training and equipment from the USG and have been placed under the control of the NSS for greater accountability. However, they still lack adequate equipment, resources, and training to accomplish their objectives and are routinely accused of corruption. Small unit commanders have admitted an inability to interdict small groups crossing the border.

I. (S/NF) ANTI-AMERICAN TERRORIST GROUPS

A. YES. The Islamic Jihad Union (IJU) has emerged as the most active terrorist group in Uzbekistan. It has demonstrated the capability to organize cells, train personnel, and infiltrate borders. Their members include men and women in several Central Asian countries. They have the ability to conduct simultaneous attacks with individual suicide bombers. The Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU) remains decidedly anti-American, especially after U.S. military action in Afghanistan. There are reports of IMU training and fighting closely with transnational groups such as al-Qaeda in Afghanistan and Pakistan.

B. NO.

C. NO.

D. Although there have been no lethal anti-American attacks in the last four years in Uzbekistan, two Uzbek policemen guarding the Embassy were killed during the July 30, 2004 suicide bombing in front of the old Chancery.

E. Yes. The Embassy on July 30, 2004. See paragraph I.D. immediately above.

F. NO.

G. The most recent attack against the U.S. was the July 2004 Embassy suicide bombing. The most recent general terrorist attacks were in 2004 in Tashkent. There was an active IJU plot that was interrupted by the NSS in July 2005. The attack was prevented. However, there is no information to suggest that attacks would be limited to specific regions. Historically, the IMU has been active in the Ferghana Valley, Uzbekistan's most populous and traditionally most religious region. We know that as the seat of government, Tashkent is always a target. We also know that the western city of Bukhara was a staging area for the group that conducted the March/April 2004 attacks.

II. (SBU) OTHER INDIGENOUS TERRORIST GROUPS - N/A

----- TRANSNATIONAL TERRORISM -----

I. (S/NF) TRANSNATIONAL TERRORIST INDICATORS

A. NO. While active in eastern Central Asia and western China, the ethnic Uighur Eastern Turkistan Liberation Movement is not known to be operating in any significant numbers in Uzbekistan to date. Such operations, if they existed, would likely take the form of support cell activities. There are small Uighur minorities in Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, and Kyrgyzstan.

B. The major transnational link is the financial and operational support given to the IJU and the IMU in order to operate within Uzbekistan. There is credible reporting indicating foreign terrorist groups, specifically the IJU, continue to plan to reestablish operational cells in Uzbekistan. There is also evidence to indicate the IMU has conducted training and received operational assistance in other countries in Central Asia, as well as in Afghanistan and Pakistan. In addition, the IJU is thought to have ingratiated itself with al-Qaeda, and is receiving funding and other assistance by vowing to carry out attacks in Uzbekistan and against the USG and American interests.

C. The Government of Uzbekistan (GOU) is vehemently anti-terrorist. The GOU has labeled the participants of the May 2005 Andijan demonstration and uprising as terrorists.

D. Although not a USG-recognized terrorist organization, Hizbut-Tahir (HT) reportedly recruits members throughout Central Asia and produces anti-American and anti-GOU propaganda. It is unclear how extensively terrorist groups draw from HT membership. The GOU security services consider HT, which is illegal in Uzbekistan and other Central Asia nations, and its members to be as

big a threat to the regime as the IMU or IJU.

¶E. YES. As regime repression continues and the Uzbekistan economy fails to produce benefits for the bulk of the population, disaffected members of the Muslim community may turn to terrorist and religious groups. In addition, there might some day be some steam behind separatist movements in regions of the country that have some ethnic identity (e.g., Khorezm and Karakalpakstan), but to date there are no indications this is happening.

¶F. Post believes that there is no ongoing attempt by hostile intelligence services to participate in anti-American terrorist acts; however, it is believed that Iranian intelligence services in Tashkent keep close tabs on American diplomatic and private interests in Uzbekistan, possibly identifying targets for retribution should U.S. military forces take action against Iran. In addition, Russian and Chinese intelligence and security services are actively encouraging an anti-American posture on the part of the GOU.

¶G. The May 2005 events in Andijan showed that small arms and explosives are available. In addition, the large ammunition storage facility explosion in Kagan near Bukhara in early 2008 raised fears within the GOU of some explosive material being obtained from munitions scattered during the accident.

NORLAND

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